



A QUALITATIVE SURVEY WITH OVER 69 PARTICIPANTS

Sims Shame? same!

BY DR JESS EGGY

CONTENT WARNING:

this zine contains mild sexual references, mentions of negative body image and stories of being shamed for sexuality.

On the 19th of February 2020, participants were asked to answer a few short questions about their experiences playing the video game 'The Sims', as teens and young adults. Over the next 7 days I received an amazing 70 responses addressing issues and topics I couldn't have ever imagined.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Thanks to everyone who contributed I was blown away by your openness. I can't believe so many of you took the time to really think about your answers and contribute such valuable experiences and thoughts to this zine. Reading them made me feel so seen, and like I wasn't alone in my experience.

Thank you.

THE STUDY



My aim was to explore how young people explore independence, sexuality, gender and power in the Sims, and the uncomfortable feelings they may experience as they test out new behaviours and concepts in the safe space of simulated reality.

As a queer woman, I wanted to understand how other people experimented with identity and behaviour and if it was similar to my own 14-year-old experience playing the Sims 2. A lot of what follows addresses the LGBTIQ+ experience due to my biased data sample (my personal circles and the greater zine making community) and also touches on themes of body shame and differently abled experiences.

THE SURVEY QUESTIONS WERE:

"How much impact has the Sims had on your development as a human being?"

"What core mechanism or gameplay aspect of the Sims do you enjoy the most?"

"When playing the Sims, did you engage in any new behaviours in-game that you never would have in real life?"

"When you played the Sims as a teen or young adult, was there anything you did that made you feel guilt or shame?"

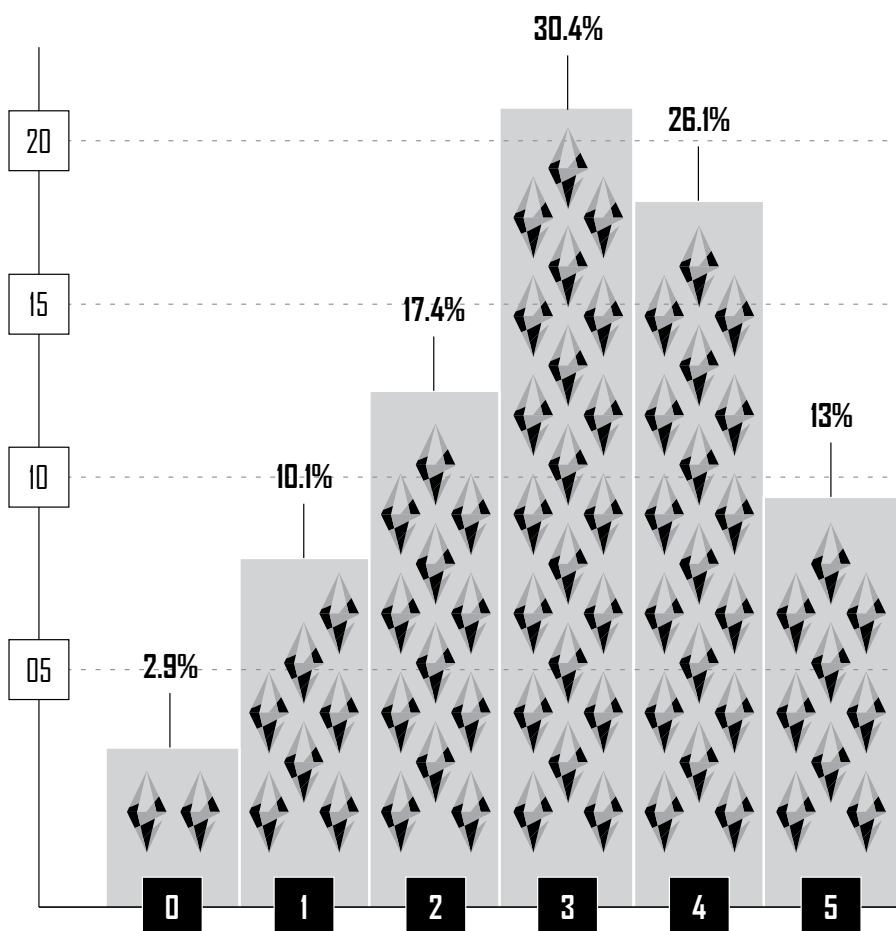
"As a teen or young adult, did have any realisations about your own personal preferences or identity as a direct result of playing the Sims?"

I wanted to get a base-line understanding of how people felt generally about the Sims before launching into the more in depth parts of the survey. these first two questions explore how people feel the Sims impacted their lives and how they actually play the Sims.

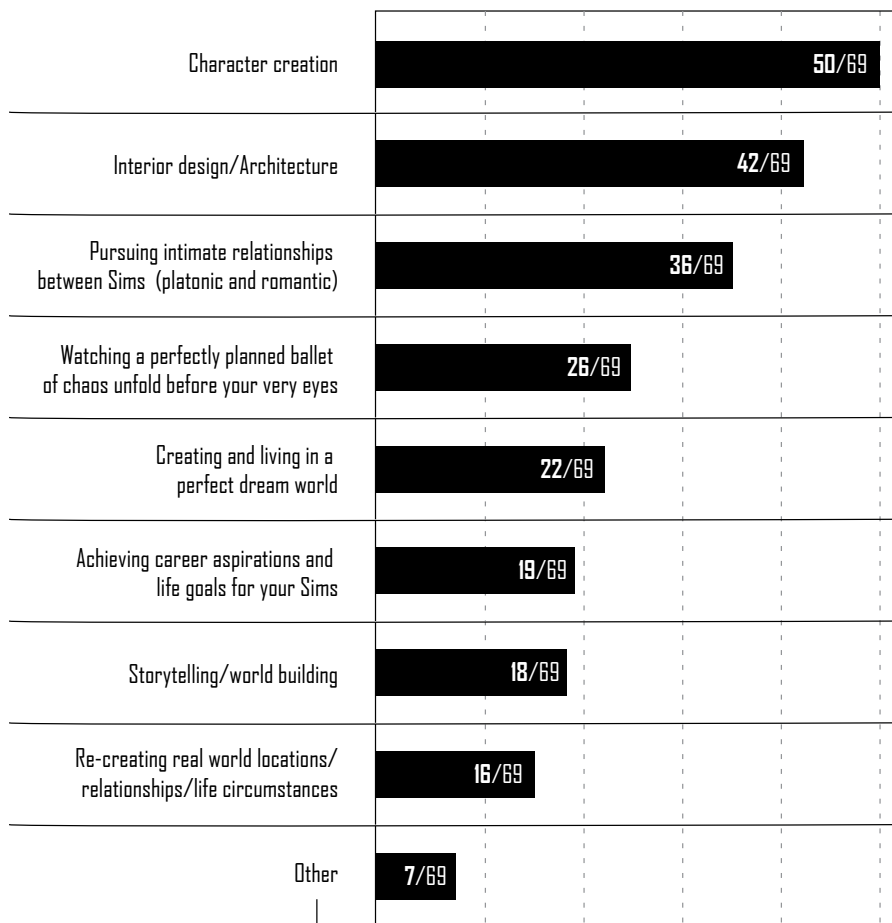
HOW MUCH IMPACT HAS THE SIMS HAD ON YOUR LIFE?



The majority of the people answering my survey were very impacted by their playing of the Sims, which really shows the bias in my data: participants were found using my Facebook page, instagram reach and friends recommending other Sims playing people in their life.



WHAT PART OF THE SIMS DO YOU ENJOY THE MOST?



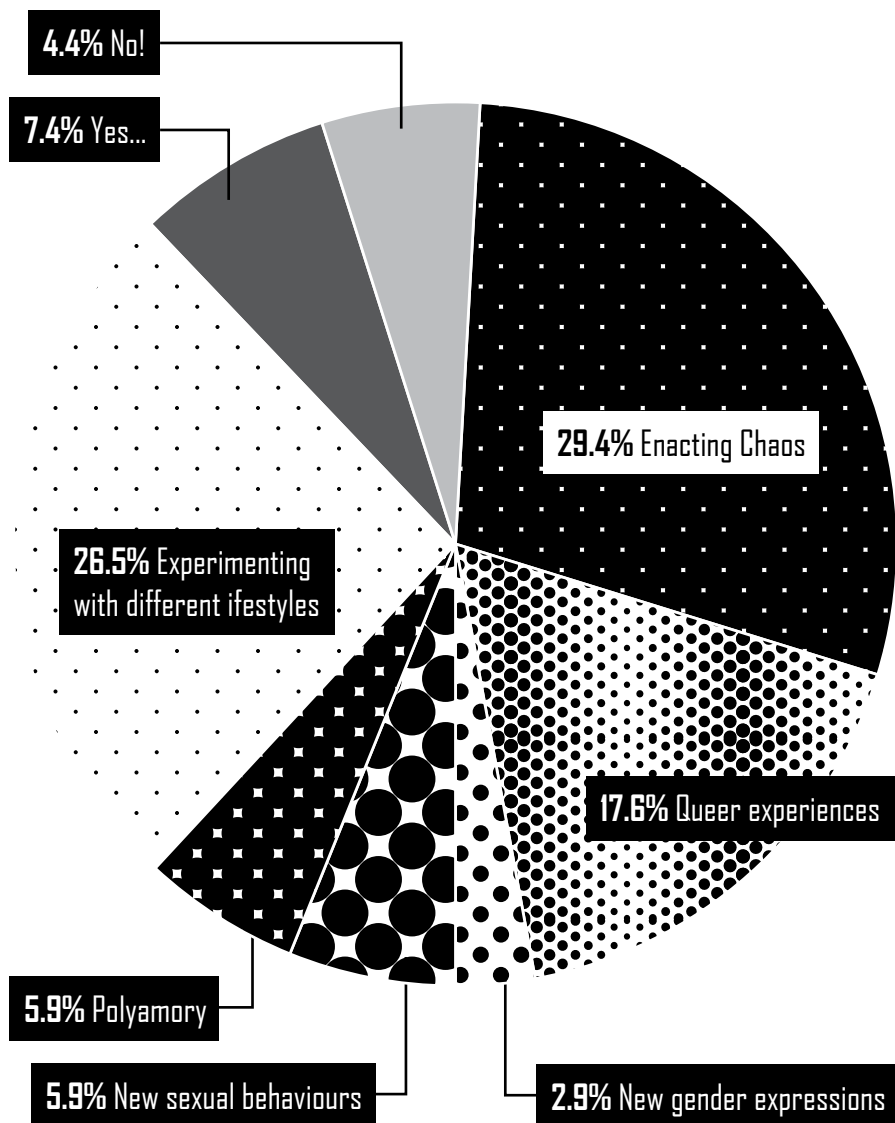
EXAMPLES:

“Sending them to work after they burn the kitchen down.”

“Reaping chaos in the community as my one sim destroys every possible relationship and marriage only to delete that sim so no family or sim has anyone to blame for the chaotic world they now are forced to live in.”

NEW BEHAVIOURS IN-GAME THAT YOU NEVER WOULD HAVE IN REAL LIFE?

People's answers to this question were wild and varied, but below I've tried to make some sense of the trends:





"Setting everything on fire."

"Mainly like cheating or killing sims. I still do, but only when it's relevant to the storyline."

"Yes, I pretty much only do this. Pretty much all my romantic relationships are unfaithful to the original love interest; at times I have even pushed the boundaries of the programming to experiment with incest. I also happily murder people and enslave groups of Sims to profit off of their skills."

"I would kill my family"

"Murder"

"Removing the pool ladder or watching them pee?"

"Murder is definitely something I've only explored on the sims. I like to make and break relationships and see how things would unfold. Cheating and getting caught and getting back together I found interesting. Destroying families."

"Drowning people and lifting weights"

"Any malicious actions"

"Definitely a lot of Murder."

"Yes, sexual behaviours and purposefully killing people in fires."

"Kissing and fucking everyone. Being a goth, romancing goths, delighting in the pixelated nudity. Also populating a house to maximum and staging mass death events to make a basement graveyard for unending greiving."

"As a kid, I first started killing sims when I had no use for them or I couldn't give them the attention they needed. I mean now as an adult I know how to use the phone in the game and can just get them to move out. Murder isn't a something I would do in real life. Although I have wanted to get rid of people in my life before, to move on from our relationship. But I have never locked any of them in a small room with no doors and windows OR set them on fire OR put them in a pool and taken the ladder away."

"Sex, murder, chores"

"I use the wickedwhims mod so... public sex"

"I murdered a few sims, so I'm going to say yes."

NEW BEHAVIOURS IN-GAME THAT YOU NEVER WOULD HAVE IN REAL LIFE?

"Trapping neighbours in a room then making sure it lit on fire, the classic pool drownings. Sometimes this was just for the hell of it, sometimes it was because i really wanted a graveyard. Occasionally it was strategic like I wanted my Sim to get together with another but they were already living with someone. So I'd kill them off to make it more of a tragic, romantic story. I enjoyed playing god and exerting maximum control over the world. In the original Sims there was this one kid who I decided was really ugly, so every time a baby grew up into him I would make everyone in the family hate him and fight with him all the time and like not feed him and not wake him up until he got sent to military school, or one time he went to sleep but was too hungry to ever get up again so he just wet himself and stayed in bed forever. Not dead, but not living either."

"Oh, all time! Most recently I had a mayor of a city marry then subsequently cheat on a cool country lady, only to take one of their kids and move to the city to become an alcohol-addled movie star. I like to tell stories in the Sims, most of them are well away from things I'd do in real life."

"I killed so many Sims"

"Death Traps"

"Making sims starve and pee themselves out of curiosity"

"Letting my kids being taken away, cheating on my partners, being mean to people and staring fights"

"Killing people and eating key lime pie! I wouldn't do those things in real life."

"When my Sims used the vibrating bed for the first time I didn't understand what was happening. My mum and dad were watching and laughing and I asked what was so funny but they didn't tell me. Later when I played two Sims in the vibrating bed I felt something, the same feeling when they kissed or made out. A part of me was tingling, a part of me felt so immersed. Sims basically taught me what sex was when my parents were too shy and awkward to tell me."

"Dating, sleeping with and marrying other women"



"Yeah, dating boys"

"All the gay shit (until I figured out how great it was to be gay...)"

"In hindsight, I was unhealthily obsessed with creating romantic relationships between Sims. I would never give my Sim a partner - instead, I'd choose an NPC and build the relationship up. The ultimate goal was to make the couple WooHoo, because I thought that proved they really loved each other. That reflects a lot of messed up views of love that I had as a young teenager! I personally did not get involved in any relationships until after graduating high school. The Sims was definitely one form of wish fulfillment in that area."

"When I first played the sims I was around 10 or 11 and I would often make my girl sims gay. I never really understood that this was probably the beginning of me exploring my sexuality and now understanding I am bisexual, I think the sims was a safe space for me to experiment and test my fantasies."

"polyamory, cheating, etc - all for the purposes of chaos, except for when i accidentally make lesbian harems whoops"

"when i first started playing i really enjoyed creating same gender couples. this was before i realized i was gay. i also did the obvious locking sims in a room or swimming pool and waiting for them to die so i could see the grim reaper"

"yes! i would always create female sims with the intention of them finding a male partner but would always jus end up making her date every single female and ruin marriages by woohooing with the wives... i'd never be a homewrecker and date multiple people without their knowledge but being young and unaware that i was gay, i probably took it to such extremes so i can excuse it as 'just a game that im being extra with' instead of seeing it for what it was- me wanting to be a female dating other girls"

"This is how I started to understand I was trans and pansexual. I makes me sim a boy and he would date many different genders which is something I wasnt comfortable with at the time"

NEW BEHAVIOURS IN-GAME THAT YOU NEVER WOULD HAVE IN REAL LIFE?

"Not that I never would in real life, but that I never had the chance to. For example, same sex relationships, but also sinister things like murdering a sim because I was bored."

"Being a tween/teen with complicated feelings about sexuality, the Sims 2 (and then Sims 3) gave me an opportunity to explore same sex relationships and romantic interactions without judgement or pressure."

"Same sex relationships"

"For the longest time growing up, I would play games that enabled queer or homosexual characters and always create relationships like that. When Sims 4 came out, and allowed greater gender play (like trans sims) I immediately started to play every sim as trans or non-binary. A couple years ago, I was struggling with my own gender identity and sexuality, and I made myself in the sims and played around with different looks and relationships. It helped me come to terms with being non-binary, as well as me being pansexual."

"I always end up in polyamorous relationships in the sims where as I wouldn't irl."

**"Absolutely -
I was obsessed with making my
sims polyamorous and sexy af"**

"Threesome"

"Actually working out"

"Make "my" sim do all the male things I wish I could"

"I did things like the 100 baby challenge and also lots of exercise that I hate in real life."

"Maybe a few, for different reasons. 1. My sims have full time jobs and I don't think I'd thrive in that kind of 9-5 environment (creatively or mental health wise). 2. My sims sometimes workout frequently (for fun, like sports options, or mindfulness, like yoga, or to keep fit), while I don't work out to the same extent. 3. There are mods that allow your sims to do things like take drugs that I would not do in real life but are fun things to do in a digital game."

"100% My Sims are always more outgoing than I am and tend to be very social."

"Focused more on career development because it seemed more accelerated than IRL."



"Not really, more things I wish I could do but can't"

"I tried out more feminine clothing than I am comfortable wearing in real life. I also made my character a lot more visibly queer than I actually am (like giving myself dyed hair, rainbow leggings, etc). I don't do those things in real life in case I get harassed."

"Confidence haha. And also being really mean to others and murdering people"

"Made my sims cheat on people. Also had kids."

"Talking to people. Friendships and relationships id be otherwise afraid to pursue"

"Yes, it made me contemplate about the things I do in my life so that I can achieve the goals I want to do. So I've become more productive and proactive in making progress, I have played less of sims but I appreciate it on a whole new level now. Just sad I can't use cheats in real life Hahahaha"

"Yes. Family making, relationships (romantic and sexual)"

"Far more outgoing as a sim that real life. Also could actually engage in art and no judgement on weird looking houses."

"owning a house"

"I doubt I could have a fiddle match with the grim reaper so that's one. On a serious note I think outside of killing everyone and being gay I tried to live a life I wanted to as an adult. I lived with other people, worked, all those ordinary things."

"I tend to create very heteronormative scenarios and big families. In real life I'm not interested in having a family at all, but somehow I keep creating the perfect nuclear family on Sims and want to keep everything very traditional."

"Studying for university"

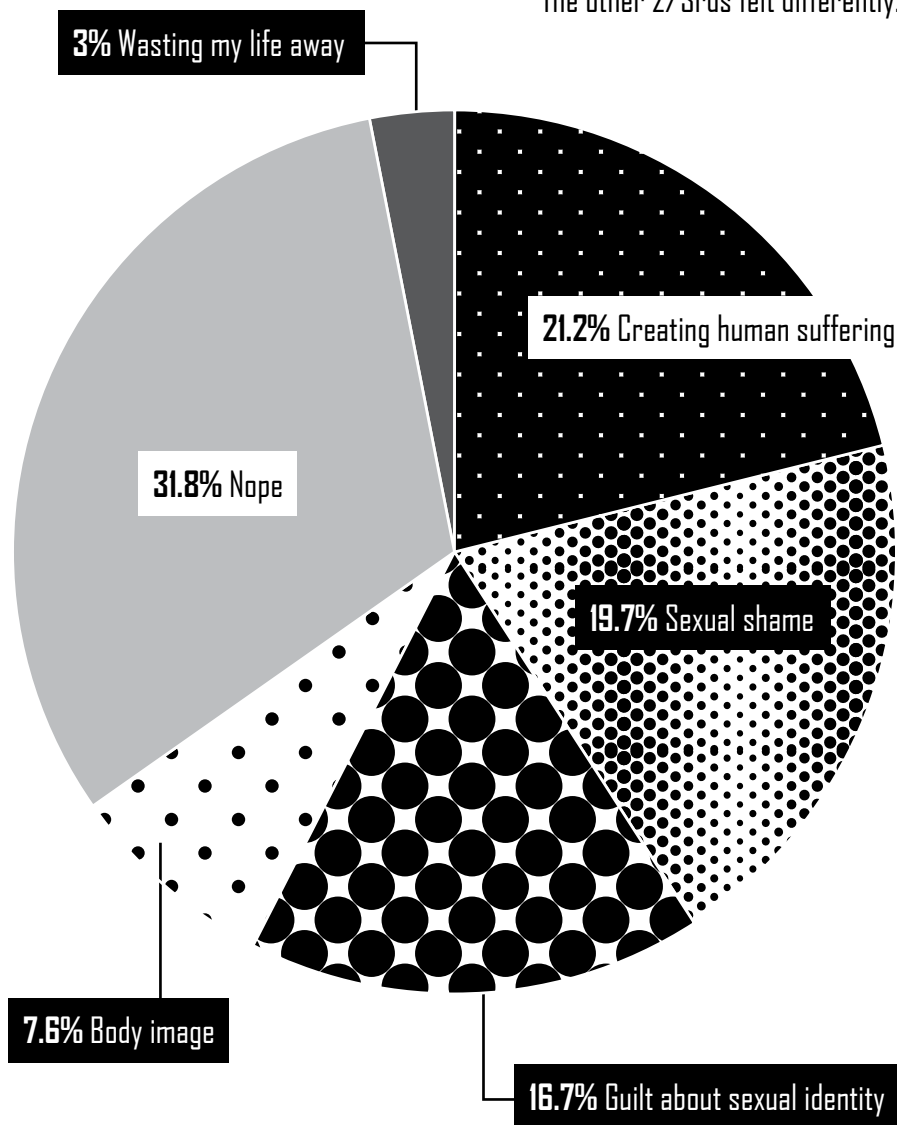
"Forcing sims to learn recipes for 12 hours solid"

"It's how I explore potential looks and behaviours for myself, I make my sims work hard all the time to be really skilled, and I cheat all their needs because I don't like reality crowding my dreamspace"

PLAYING THE SIMS, WAS THERE ANYTHING THAT MADE YOU FEEL GUILT OR SHAME?

Interestingly, almost 1/3 of participants said they had experienced no shame playing the Sims.

The other 2/3rds felt differently.





"Making them die because I forgot to put a door to the toilet on the house."

"I once didn't know how to get my kitten to come inside and he got sad and hungry. I moved the food and some sheltered bedspace outside and he was fine but ouch."

"I felt guilty if one of my sims died or if they were taken because of neglect. I played the sims when I was really young and didn't understand how to take care of my sims children."

"I think abandoning them? Like I would not play for ages and it felt like they were pets that I didnt feed"

"Murdering babies when my sim couldn't handle caring for them all."

"yeah, all the home wrecking i did. id say its female empowerment bc the men were trash but sis they were sims what the hell are they going to be trash about!"

"Not really. But i still always feel shitty giving bad/mean responses. I havent even learned the mischief skill through cheating. I'm too sad to press the button."

"Not really. Maybe murdering sims."

"Oh, so, when I was pretty young this kid, who I wouldn't say I was friends with but like school-quainted, created sims of me and some of my other school-quaintances. Every day they would come in and give us an update on how our Sim-equivalents were doing. I think after like a week we must have been getting noticeable bored (a robbie williams album came out.) because this kid decided to start holding our Sim-equivalents psuedo-hostage. Like, instead of our updates being like 'you got a job and read a book' they became 'if you don't give me your tuck shop pizza I'll make Sim-you break up its relationship with the mailperson'. This went on until rollercoaster tycoon came into cereal boxes and we truly moved on with our lives. I wanna say I felt guilt/shame/fear."

"No, I felt like the Sims was a game about doing ridiculous things to people. The only time I ever felt bad was when I downloaded a user created mod that allowed you to cook babies on the BBQ and my mum saw and got upset."

"Ignoring sims feelings"

PLAYING THE SIMS, WAS THERE ANYTHING THAT MADE YOU FEEL GUILT OR SHAME?

"I felt bad for killing people sometimes. I would always mute the sound."

"As much as I enjoyed making my sims suffer it made me feel bad because I would get attached to some of them, there were moments where I felt empathetic. Then I trapped them in an empty room and left them to die."

"Yes, often when I would change the cheat so that I could see them naked- and then would make same sex couples have sex"

"I played it since I was in Gradeschool actually! And yes, there was cause I was doing the things that were not allowed to be done in real life like "being gay" and fucking almost everyone in town"

"as a lesbian who was raised in a fairly conservative christian home, even something as mundane as making them woohoo gave me a shameful thrill haha, let alone making almost every single one of my sims gay.... and we shan't speak of wicked whims"

"When I was younger, I used to. Make them really sexy."

"Yep! All the sexy stuff and being a bit turned on by sims characters??? Also making real life people n fucking them or making them suffer..."

"I once used mods to get a teenage girl pregnant to an adult man."

"Probably just the sight of the big love heart headboard bed after a while. All the fucking. Downloading nude skins so I could have them walk around nude and without scandalising other Sims. I downloaded so many skins / modified skins files."

"Let my dudes get alien pregnant"

"Cheating"

"Yes. Downloading sex mods."

"I was so guilty when my sims had sex. I was catholic so obviously watching was a sin lol"

"having the sims woohoo with each other made me really nervous and i would always face my computer screen towards the wall while i was playing."

"I would often make myself and crushes, then get them together"



"Making sims woohoo"

"When I created my own family members, particularly my sister or friends, and made them fall in love with people or do things I know they wouldn't be okay with. I never showed these towns to people in my real life because I knew it was wrong. I remember coming across a town that my sister had made, years later, to find out she made it so the Sims her had married our Cousin! That made me feel less like a freak. Like we all have shameful sims secrets"

"Never, well except making them woohoo and my parents not seeing"

"Dating, sleeping with and marrying other women"

"Yeah dating boys!"

"Same gender female relationships"

"Yes, creating same sex couples."

"I felt pretty guilty feeling this way playing a queer character"

"Young adult: Exploring my bisexuality through the game because I haven't had a chance to irl because of being in a monogamous relationship with a man. I felt kind of ashamed for some unknown reason."

"Oh absolutely, making woman Sims have romantic relationships with each other"

"Making gay characters, woohooing"

"I loved making characters look like me, only hotter, and would feel guilty thinking about how I would explain them to friends"

"I feel super guilty playing as mean Sims. I feel like I'm insulting real people in a way."

"I've played since I was quite young, for about 10 years. I'm 23 now and worry that I should be making sims that reflect the body positivity ideas I agree with in real life. If I create sims characters that don't look like me (i.e. if I create sims that are white or very thing), sometimes I feel inauthentic."



"Sometimes I would feel guilty about making my Sim slimmer than I am. On the one hand it's somewhat escapist, on the other hand it's not being accepting towards yourself and your body image."

"The first thing that pops into my mind was that I often felt guilty for playing the game (and still do as I am still a fan of The Sims to this day) as I felt other people thought I was wasting my time. There's certainly a sense of shame and girliness associated with it. The other thing I feel guilty about is that if a Sim joined my family and they didn't fit my personal ideal of beauty I would find myself treating them worse than the others (not letting them live a fulfilling life, neglect, using them as a baby machine etc...)."

"Playing Sims feels shameful in itself because I spent way too much time on it. Also, anything romantic made me feel guilty."

"Not really, it's just a game."

"I made a thin character cook a party-sized amount of food, then forced her to eat all of it until she became fat. I would have been mortified if anyone found out. Thinking about it now, I guess there were two reasons. It gave me space to challenge the harmful narrative surrounding weight in our culture. Intentional weight gain felt transgressive. It was also a chance for me to explore my attraction to fat bodies, though this was possibly the source of the shame I felt. Especially because they were female-coded, and this was years before I identified as bisexual."

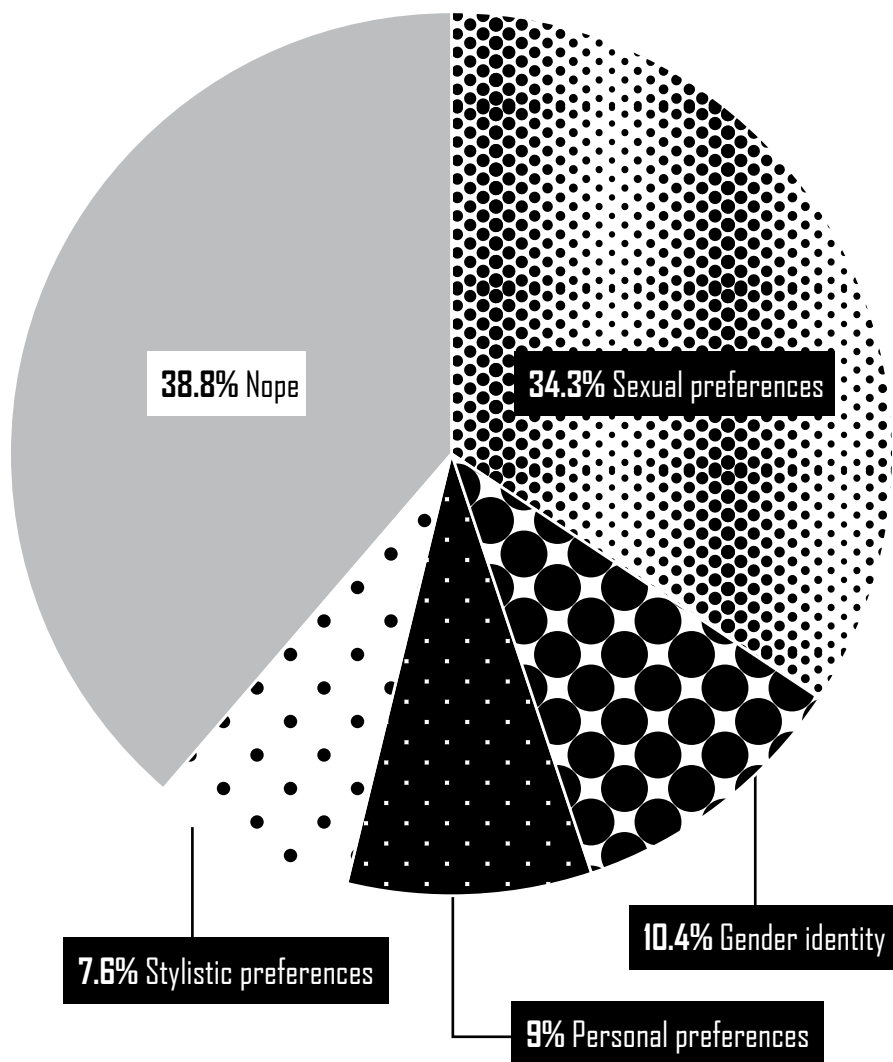
"Not in terms of what I did with my character but I did wish there was an option to use gender-neutral pronouns."

"Nope because it's a video game and has no physical impact on real life (to me at least)"

"Hmm not really, it was all 'just a game' so I could do everything I wanted with no consequences. Although as a teen I do remember being self conscious of the sims I created. No one was allowed to see my game, it was like my diary. My sims were a persona of my young queer self and I was not out in my own life."

REALISATIONS ABOUT YOUR OWN PERSONAL PREFERENCES OR IDENTITY?

Almost 40% of participants did not have any Sims-based epiphanies, but many discovered key things about their sexuality or gender expression by experimenting in-game.



REALISATIONS ABOUT YOUR OWN PERSONAL PREFERENCES OR IDENTITY?

"No I don't think so! But it did give me a chance to experiment with gender fluidity and style."

"No, as I'm pansexual, I had that realisation much later once I found out what it was."

"I made gay Sims because I'm gay, but I certainly made those Sims before I myself fully understood my own sexuality."

"Nope, I'm just glad I can make trans sims now"

"I was too bloody oblivious to have any realisations in the Sims, though it certainly gave me a safe space to try on different identities and experiment."

"No, not until this survey am I questioning my choices."

"Hmmm not really! As i was creating my dream self in sims! Which is queer as fuck, changes into stylish clothing, making enough money to do all the things I love, and making out with beautiful peepz and living my best life with my fur companions"

"I liked making female sims look as masc as possible, and I liked being able to have my sims just woohoo with anybody"

"My gender identity and my sexuality"

"Before I came out, I tried to make a boy character but it was just me. It made me feel super dysphoric and it made me realise that a) I probably shouldn't make male characters, and b) I'm maybe not telling myself something!"

"I preferred making myself male - tadah im ftm now"

"It started with playing as the female characters and dressing them in the most masc hair and clothes I could find! Eventually I got tired with the lack of masc options though. So I went to the male characters and it just made me smile, I remember feeling excited to play them. At the time of playing the male characters, I didn't think about how it could mean I am trans, because it was a just a game. But now Sims has become one of the many things I can reflect on from my teens and young adulthood that helps me confirm my gender as a trans man. Transitioning felt the same as it did when I first did it in sims, euphoric and exciting."



"I played The Sims I religiously as a kid, I had all the expansion packs I could convince my parents to buy and would spend literal days playing. I remember going to my parent's friend's house in my early teens. Their daughter had the Sims 2 on PlayStation, my eyes lit up - my parents wouldn't buy me a console and hadn't let me buy Sims 2 on PC so this was my first chance to play. We sat down to play split-screen while our parents were off socialising. We both had made 2 sims, all living in the same house - two dudes and two women.

Everything was going fine, we'd built a house and settled them in. My friend decided we should start making them have relationships and I agreed. I started getting the two women sims to get to know each other, chatting, making jokes. Then I started making them flirt, which seemed to go unnoticed at first but eventually they got close enough that I unlocked the kiss option - the natural progression on the way to "moving in" together.

As soon as the pixels portraying the two women's faces got vaguely close to each other my friend yelled ""EW. You can't do that, that's two GIRLS."" I didn't know how to react, at the time I didn't really know anything about sexuality in general- let alone my own- but I assumed since the game gave me the option that it was okay.

I was so embarrassed, I didn't play the Sims for years and years afterwards. I always thought back to that moment and feeling like I'd done something wrong.

It wouldn't be until many years later that I even vaguely came to terms with my sexuality and reflected on all the gay shit I'd been doing as a teenager. Growing up out in the country, The Sims was basically the only neutral-positive representation of gayness that I'd been exposed to and I am so glad I got the opportunity to have those first, private moments playing The Sims I on my first PC to be exposed and allowed to explore those possibilities (even though same sex options were limited to ""moving in"" back in the day) before the world's biases were brought into it."

REALISATIONS ABOUT YOUR OWN PERSONAL PREFERENCES OR IDENTITY?

"Sexual preferences"

"That I was very very interested in woohoo-ing"

"It was my first exploration into shipping. I am now someone who is passionate about fandom and creating sims for my favourite characters was probably the gateway before I grew old enough to read/write and interact with fanfic which is a big part of who I am now."

"/Basically/ everyone in the sims /can/ be queer. Every sim can potentially have romantic relationships with all genders. I didn't play the game and then come to the realisation I'm queer, but I think it might have helped me as I was a child and maybe even normalise queerness a little bit."

"I definitely explored different sexualities and types of relationships. This probably really helped with understanding my own sexuality and the concepts of Polyamory and monogamy."

Yes, I noticed I always preferred male characters as myself

"I quickly realized I was not straight"

"I'm into old men for sure."

"Oh, played sim-dating-city (or whatever it was called) a couple of years after the above story and it definitely reaffirmed my weird 'heteronormativity is crinkly' feelings. Plus I didn't want a dog, it was always such an effort caring for a sim-dog."

"The way the game let me be promiscuously bisexual in a safe and controllable context, was cool. I wish I'd made that association with my own sexuality earlier but idk. I don't remember being into the baby making side of woohoo, but I loved hosting raves with clowns and aliens I could fuck. No STDs in sims, just jealous lovers and embarrassment. Yeah idk, I did more specific sexual-social development on chatrooms and what I found out about myself was a bit scary and impractical. Sims was ultimate fantasy. None legwork. Only endlessly successive woohoo and feeling like that's definitely my jam."

"i wouldnt say direct result but i did realise that making my female sim always date females was probably me yearning and unknowingly wanting that but dismissing it as just a game"

"I liked women"



"That I experience same sex attraction."

"Yes started to realise the kinda of life end goal I had with involves same gender partners no children and a fairly isolated "country/cottage" existence. Which is what I am currently working towards with my girlfriends."

"Yes. Fairly a lot dealing with LGBTQIA+ related issues. And social interaction."

"Definitely made me realise I was bisexual and help me feel a bit less shame about that (grew up in a house that was not necessarily overtly homophobic but with outdated and ignorant ideas towards sexuality). The Sims being treated the exact same regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin colour etc. made the game a positive experience."

"Absolutely- started to realise I was gay after many years had passed and my female sims had only ever married women. Less bi than I thought."

"I'd get teased by my family for always making gay sims but jokes on them it made me realise I was bi"

"I realised I wasn't straight when I couldn't stop making same sex couples"

"i started playing the sims in my very late teens, so by that point i already knew i was gay, but i think being able to construct homoromantic narratives in the game has been an interesting exercise in making myself more comfortable expressing my sexuality in real life, even with small things like casual dating. Not really, if anything my sim is more sexually active and keen to explore than I actually am and want to be."

"Yes. When I was younger and playing Sims 3 with my friends, I would always make a sim-self but always be in heteronormative relationships cause I didn't want anyone to know that I was questioning that. I just played straight all the time. Eventually, I started having my sim-self experiment with different clothing styles and romantically perusing other genders. I feel like even tho I didn't realize it at the time, it was a precursor to me eventually exploring my identity and sexuality"

"That I am not straight"

REALISATIONS ABOUT YOUR OWN PERSONAL PREFERENCES OR IDENTITY?

"less a realisation and more of a confirmation of queer identity. I always knew I was a little homo but it wasn't a thing I ever saw in media. but in the Sims it's just a thing, it's not a big deal or out of the ordinary"

"I definitely realised I was a bit obsessive when it came to life goals - there wasn't much room for chaos, even in my game play. Also queerness duh!"

"I never made fat sims. Always the skinniest. In real life I am fat but I think I couldn't fathom anyone it anything being attractive if fat. I remember realising that and knowing how dumb it was"

"That I am clearly a control freak. I was also obsessed with Sex which I was definitely not having and would create male characters (I am Female), and they would seduce, steal partners and sleep with everyone and then reject them all and be horrible to them until they hated him and him them. I liked the maximum control in relationships and the freedom and power that came with playing a male character."

"I learned that I am impatient and controlling with a flair for interior design."

"Perhaps the idea of children. In theory it's exciting but I almost always immediately regret getting Sims pregnant."

"While playing as the child of my mayor-turned-actor, I had them be a master of the arts. Through them I realised that I'd like to get better at my writing."

"Probably that I desperately wanted to be perfect. Also that I was only interested in relationships with men and yet I find them boring and highly irritating if I spend much time with them."

"I really like interior design"

"I am not good at interior design"

"I realised I didn't really care who my Sims got with, so long as I could customise them"

"I like Pink."

"Not so much as I did get to explore human interaction."

"No, but it normalised my feelings."




Note from the Editor

Reading all these responses crystalised for me why I wanted to do this survey in the first place.

My experience playing the Sims 2 at age 13 or so was one of intense shame. It is one of the first times I remember feeling turned on, or as I thought at the time 'a weird tingling', and not knowing what it was or why it happened when the Sims made out and had sex. I would play the game on the family computer and face the risk of my parents seeing my game and subsequently my Sims having sex - I always felt on edge.

I never really got into the human suffering aspect of the Sims, but I would often pursue storylines where one person would impregnate several female Sims and exert power over them by not allowing them to leave the house or follow their own dreams. I felt immense guilt about it at the time, while now I simply look at that behaviour and wonder why it felt so compelling. In recent versions of the game where I can create a 'fem' sim who can impregnate other sims and also have cute masculine hairstyles, I don't really pursue those control storylines - for the first time I feel like I can actually create and enjoy 'perfect worlds', where my arty Sim becomes a painter, lives in a beautiful tiny house with a beautiful wife and their beautiful children. Which is strange in a new way, as I have no intention of having kids. It's weird what we want in our fantasies, and how different it can be to our real life wants, or make us realise what we actually we want.



On the 19th of February 2020, participants were asked to answer a few short questions about their experiences playing the video game 'The Sims', as teens and young adults. Over the next 7 days I received an amazing 70 responses addressing issues and topics I couldn't have ever imagined.

This zine was created on the stolen lands of Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation.
I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge that
sovereignty has never been ceded.